

Yesterday there was a meeting of these men at the old slave market. The room was crowded. I sat on the platform where thousands of their fellow-men had been sold, where women had stood stripped of their clothing, bearing the rude jests, the indecent remarks, the insulting examinations made by a hard-hearted, licentious crowd; where mothers had heard for the last time the cries of their little ones; where heart-rending had been torn asunder; where the image of God was bruised and crushed; where unimaginable horrors had been witnessed—I sat there, and heard the men, some of them as white as myself, talk of their future. They came together to hear remarks from Rev. Mr. French and Lieut. Ketchum, to ask questions and consult with each other.

They wanted to know what title they would have to their land—what assurance they could have that it would be theirs, after they had improved it. Their questions were plain, straightforward, and showed a shrewdness which I had not looked for.

Rev. Mr. French said: "I heard a white man ridicule the project, who said one white rebel going among you will come down five of you. Is that so?"

"Let him try it!" "We'll fight!" were the responses.

A tall middle-aged man, black as anthracite coal, rose and said, calmly, deliberately, but with a tone of voice which revealed determination not to be trifled with:

"They may talk about one white man scaring five negroes, but he can't scare one. It has been the power of slavery which has cowed us, but that power is gone. They can't scare us now!"

Mr. French said that the freedmen at Beaufort, although not so intelligent as they were, had become independent in thought and feeling upon the subject of their persons.

"What would you do if your old master should come to take you into slavery again?" he asked of an old woman who was hosing her cotton. "I would look him down, sir! That is what I would do."

There were intelligent men in the audience—men who had hired their time, paying fifty dollars a month to their masters, supporting themselves and their families. It is little to say that they will not take care of themselves. They are the bone and muscle of the South, and they have already shown that they have no mean brain power. "The negroes of Tennessee have shown a greater capacity than the poor whites for self-education," said one of the speakers.

There was a remark of an officer who holds a high position in Gen. Sherman's military family, and who has had great opportunity to make observations. In this same old slave market, where the iron gratings are still standing in the windows, are hundreds of colored children, learning the rudiments of languages, taught by teachers of their own color.

Sitting on the auctioneer's platform, where the wailings of despair have rent the air, I listened to recitations as correctly given as by children of their own years in the graded schools of Boston. They sang the songs of liberty with a sweet and true voice, never heard from an Anglo-Saxon choir of youthful voices. Yesterday those hundreds of dark-visaged men, led by Lieut. Ketchum, rolled out in grand chorus the song sung by the colored soldiers around their camp fires, and on the march into battle at Honey Hill—

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chimney, and exploding within, dumping several cart-loads of brickbats, mortar and roof into the editorial room, smashing all the windows, splintering the doors. It was the room where secession had its incubation. The leading rebellious spirits once sat there in their arm-chairs and enthroned King Cotton, and demanded homage to his majesty from all nations. The first shell sent the Mercury up town to a safer locality; but when Sherman began his march into the interior, the Mercury fled into the country to Cheraw, it is said, right into Sherman's line of advance.

The Courier office, in Bay street, had not escaped damage. A shell entered through the roof, tearing down through the floors, ripping up the boards, breaking the timbers, jarring the plaster from the walls, exploding in the second story, rattling all the tiles on the roof, blowing out the windows, shattering the ironing stone, opening the whole building to the sunlight. Another shell had dashed the sidewalk to pieces, and blown a passage into the cellar, wide enough to admit a six-horse wagon.

Near the Courier office were the Union Bank and Charleston Bank. They were costly buildings, fitted up with marble mantels, floors of terra cotta tiles, counters elaborate in carved work, and with gorgeous frescoing on the walls. There, five years ago, the merchants of the city, the planters of the country, the slave traders, assembled on exchange, talked treason, and indulged in extravagant day dreams of the future glory of Charleston. The rooms are silent now. The oaken doors splintered, the frescoing washed from the walls by the rains which drip from the shattered roof, the desks are kindling wood, the highly wrought cornice-work has dropped from the ceiling to the ground, the tiles are piled up, the marble mantels splintered, the beautiful plate-glass windows lie in million fragments upon the floor. In short, the banks have broken! They helped on the rebellion—contributed to their funds to inaugurate it, and invested largely in the State stock to place the State on a war footing. By a document which has fallen into my hands, which lies before me, I learn that the three banks already named held on January 6, 1865, six hundred and ten thousand dollars' worth of the seven per cent. State stock, issued under the act of December, 1861. They would sell it dog cheap now.

Passing from the banks to the hotel, I found a like scene of desolation. The door of the Mills house was open. The windows had lost their glazing, and were boarded up. Sixteen shots have struck the building. The rooms where secession had been rampant in the beginning, where bottles of wine had been drunk over the fall of Sumter, echoed only to our footsteps. The Charleston hotel has several great holes in the walls.

The churches have not escaped. St. Michael's, the oldest of all, has been repeatedly struck. The pavement is thick with broken glass which has been rattled from the windows by the explosions of the shells. All the churches in the lower portion of the city are never heard from an Anglo-Saxon choir of youthful voices. Yesterday those hundreds of dark-visaged men, led by Lieut. Ketchum, rolled out in grand chorus the song sung by the colored soldiers around their camp fires, and on the march into battle at Honey Hill—

"We will fight for Liberty," closing with Old Hundred, not sung by a half-dozen, but by every person present.

Such is a brief review of the original elements of society in Savannah. Another element is here—the restless, energetic Yankee. Stores are multiplying, but they are kept by men from Boston and New York, who have not come for a day or a week, but who intend to make Savannah their future home

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